



Photo: Archives of Friends of Peirce Mill.

This photo, probably from the 1940s, shows the stone headrace and breast wheel from the 1935 restoration, a vine-covered west face, and a vintage sign. The sign reads “Pierce Mill Old Process Water-ground Meal and Flour.” In this period, the mill made substantial deliveries of flour and corn meal to government cafeterias in the Washington area.

Friends of
PEIRCE MILL
4305 38th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20016

Milling About

News from the Friends of Peirce Mill Winter 2003



Repairs Completed to Column and Beam

We are happy to report that our contractor, **Steve Ortado**, has completed repairs to Column #2 at the basement level of the mill, the main beam it supports, and the column above it at the first floor level. The photograph shows the new column and capital fully installed at the basement level. The job also included strengthening of the main beam above the column by injection of a special epoxy material and installation of a steel rod in the cracked upper surface, and injection of epoxy into the rotted out lower end of the corresponding column on the first floor. The work was carried out according to a detailed plan prepared by our structural engineering consultants, Robert Silman Associates.

Rock Creek Park officials have accepted the work and have asked us to carry out similar repairs to the three other columns at the basement level. A plan for this work, also prepared by Silman, has been submitted to the Park for approval. As the other photo shows, Steve Ortado has now moved the jacks and shoring to the new column and will shortly lift the weight of the building off this column and remove it for inspection. Then a decision will be made as to whether it can be repaired or will need to be replaced as was necessary on the first column.



The completed work on Column #2, showing the new post and capital in place.



The jacks in position at Column #1 at the basement level, preparatory to removal for inspection. Also visible is the column at the south wall, which will be the next to be examined.

Plans for a Pumped Water System to Power the Mill

Engineers and architects retained by the Friends have drawn up a plan for a system to pump water from Rock Creek to power the mill. According to the plan, prepared by **Baird Smith** of Quinn Evans Architects and **Tim Motsch** of Alpha Corp., a concrete pit or weir would be installed in the bank of the creek just above the present dam,

and a submerged pump would supply creek water from there to a short headrace adjacent to the mill through a buried pipe. The headrace would discharge water through a gate into the flume and thence over the waterwheel and back into the creek. The plan is being submitted to Rock Creek Park officials for review.

Opening of New Exhibits at the "Peirce Barn"

The building across the parking lot from Peirce Mill, built originally as a carriage house for the Peirce plantation, has been reborn as "Peirce Barn." Until recently it had served as an art gallery for a group of artists but now Rock Creek Park has taken over the building and turned it into an exhibit about milling along Rock Creek in the 19th century. The exhibit includes a number of historical photographs of Peirce Mill, showing its evolution from a commercial flour mill in the 1800s, to a teahouse in the 1920s, and finally to its restoration in the 1930s. We are working with the Park on a plan to provide volunteer interpreters during certain hours and to display a panel showing the work currently in progress inside the mill. The Barn is open from noon to 4 PM Saturdays and Sundays. It is well worth a visit and we encourage members to drop in.

Fund Raising Activities

The new and expanded Fund Raising Committee has met several times over the past two months and has launched a new campaign to finance the next phases of work at the mill, that is, work which will follow the on-going repairs to the mill floors. Members of the committee include **Steve Dryden** (chair), **David Lyman**, **Richard Abbott**, **Tom Blackburn** and **Jennifer Owens**. Jennifer and Tom are new members of the Friends and as both have professional fund raising experience they are particularly welcome! Our goal is to raise \$500,000 over the next two years, which would allow us to complete work on the repair and restoration of the wooden milling machinery, including a new water wheel. Jennifer has drawn up an initial target list of some twenty foundations, including a number who given us grants in the past and may consider additional donations, and several grant applications have already gone out. We are also applying for a grant through the Save America's Treasures program.

Fund raising is a very high priority issue for us just now. To be able to move ahead with the project after mid-2003 on any reasonable time schedule, we need to secure substantial new funding. You'll find a report on our financial condition elsewhere in this issue.

When we founded the Friends some six years ago, we had expected that the National Park Service would at some point be able to finance a portion of the cost of the mill restoration. Except for a grant of \$21,000 to help cover the cost of the Historic Structures Report

we prepared at the request of Rock Creek Park, this has not happened. We have recently been in contact with the offices of several senators who sit on the committee that appropriates funds for the National Park Service to acquaint them with our project in hopes that we could get an "earmarking" of funds for the project in the FY 2004 budget now in preparation. As you may expect, this is difficult to do without a senator who will "champion our cause." It would be a lot easier if we had a senator of our own here in DC, but unfortunately we don't! At any rate, we felt that it was worth a try and the time is right. If any members have good contacts on the Hill, please let **Richard Abbott** know (202 244-2379).



Special thanks go to our members who contributed to the restoration through our recent appeal letter. The letter produced donations totaling \$1,800. These funds were most welcome and will be used immediately to pay for the engineering studies of the planned pumped water system for the mill.

Financial Report

Our business manager, **David Lyman** reports that currently we have \$104,964 in our account at the National Park Foundation, and \$1,939 in our checking account at Riggs Bank.

David also reports donations from all sources since our founding in 1997 through January 2003 total \$273,033. This includes grants from foundations, associations, corporations and the National Park Service of \$247,550 (24 grants), individual donations from \$1000 to \$5000 of \$15,800 (5 donations), individual donations from \$100 to \$1000 of \$3,505 (16 donations) and numerous individual donations of less than \$100 totaling \$1,569. In addition we had in-kind donations of \$4,609 (special lumber, and services). This does not include membership fees which average roughly \$2000 annually.

FOPM Board Members, Officers and Key Individuals

President:	Richard Abbott
Vice President:	Steve Dryden
Secretary/Treasurer:	Sheila Ploger
Business Manager:	David Lyman
Archivist:	Philip Gaudette
Legal and Tax Affairs:	Gene Hines
New Board Member:	Arthur Fort
Chair, Proctors	
Committee:	Mrs. Randall H. Hagner, Jr.
Assistant Chair,	
Proctors Committee:	Mrs. I. Townsend Burden
Special Events Coordinator:	Robert Day

The Turbine at Peirce Mill

Derek Ogden, our friend and millwright, wrote us a great letter about the Leffel turbine once used at Peirce Mill and enclosed some detailed prints: a catalogue picture from 1891 and a photo of a similar turbine from Alley Spring Roller Mill in Missouri that he repaired in 1995. Here are some of the fascinating details from the letter (paraphrased in some cases, apologies for any errors or distortions).

The turbine from the Peirce Mill photograph in the last issue of *Milling About* is a 'Standard' Leffel turbine manufactured in the 1890's, apparently about 45" diameter. It would have produced about 30 horsepower, consumed at least 6,000 cubic feet per minute, and had a speed of about 100 revolutions per minute. The turbine is a horizontal wheel with vertical output shaft, and it would have used an iron bevel gear to drive a horizontal shaft in the lower floor of the mill. [Ed. note: The photo in the last issue shows the turbine in the correct orientation, and our caption was incorrect.]

The water consumption of such a turbine would quickly lower the working head behind any dam built on Rock Creek in the absence of a storage pond. Mr. Ogden concludes: "I have always been mystified when told the 'main shaft broke' but all is now revealed—to me. I don't believe anything was wrong with the turbine, other than it not being a sound choice for such a poor water supply."

Mr. Ogden also mentions some good leads for further investigation. Contact us if you would like to dig deeper into this minor mystery.

New Federal Initiative in Support of Historic Preservation

The White House has just announced an initiative called Preserve America, a move which could eventually benefit the Peirce Mill restoration project. The Executive Order of March 3, 2003 creates an Advisory Council on Historic Preservation which will "help strengthen understanding of our heritage and increase pride in America." It appears to be aimed mainly at improving coordination of historic preservation activities of the Department of Commerce/Economic Development Administration and the Department of the Interior/National Park Service. No new funds are being made available at this time, nor does the Council yet have the authority to make grants, though it may get that authority by some time next year.

While it is too early to judge how or when this might benefit our project, a statement by the newly-appointed Chairman, **John L. Nau, III**, strikes a chord:

"We know from history that the federal government works best when it works in partnership with communities, counties, states, tribes, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and individuals to unleash the creativity and innovation that exists everywhere in America. The initiatives announced form the basis for increased attention to the role of federal agencies in heritage tourism and local public-private partnerships in historic and cultural preservation." **Richard Abbott** has been in touch with a spokesman for the Council and plans to track its activities and to seek support in securing federal funding for our project.

Tell Us Your Story

Got an interesting story to tell? A photo of the mill you found in the attic. A favorite memory from your childhood of Peirce Mill?

Share your story ideas or vintage photos with other mill enthusiasts and friends. To submit your contribution, send it to Friends of Peirce Mill c/o **Richard Abbott**, 4305 38th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20016 or e-mail it to **abbott1229@erols.com**.

We'll try to get your submission into the next issue of *Milling About*. Thanks!